MONSTRESS
MARJORIE LIU • SANA TAKEDA
ISSUE 4
image

ISSUE #4

MONSTRESS

MARJORIE LIU • SANA TAKEDA

WRITER — ARTIST

RUS WOOTON — LETTERING & DESIGN

JENNIFER M. SMITH — EDITOR

THE STORY SO FAR...In the aftermath of a terrible war, the Federation of Man is still in conflict with supernatural Arcanic hybrids, whose bodies are harvested for lilium, a powerful substance coveted by a human religious order called the Cumaea. Maika Halfwolf, an Arcanic teen, is on the run after breaking into a Cumaean stronghold, murdering one of its elders, and stealing from her a photograph and a fragment of an ancient and powerful mask, both of which might provide clues about the murder of Maika's mother.

In the wake of her escape, Maika has been hunted by Federation soldiers and Cumaean Inquisitrixes alike, but she has fought them all off with the help of her greatest secret, and greatest burden: a creature called a Monstrum that lives inside of her and hungers for flesh. With the help of her two companions, a young Arcanic girl named Kippa and an enigmatic cat named Master Ren, Maika has turned south in search of answers about her past, her present, and the monster under her skin.

MONSTRESS CREATED BY MARJORIE LIU & SANA TAKEDA

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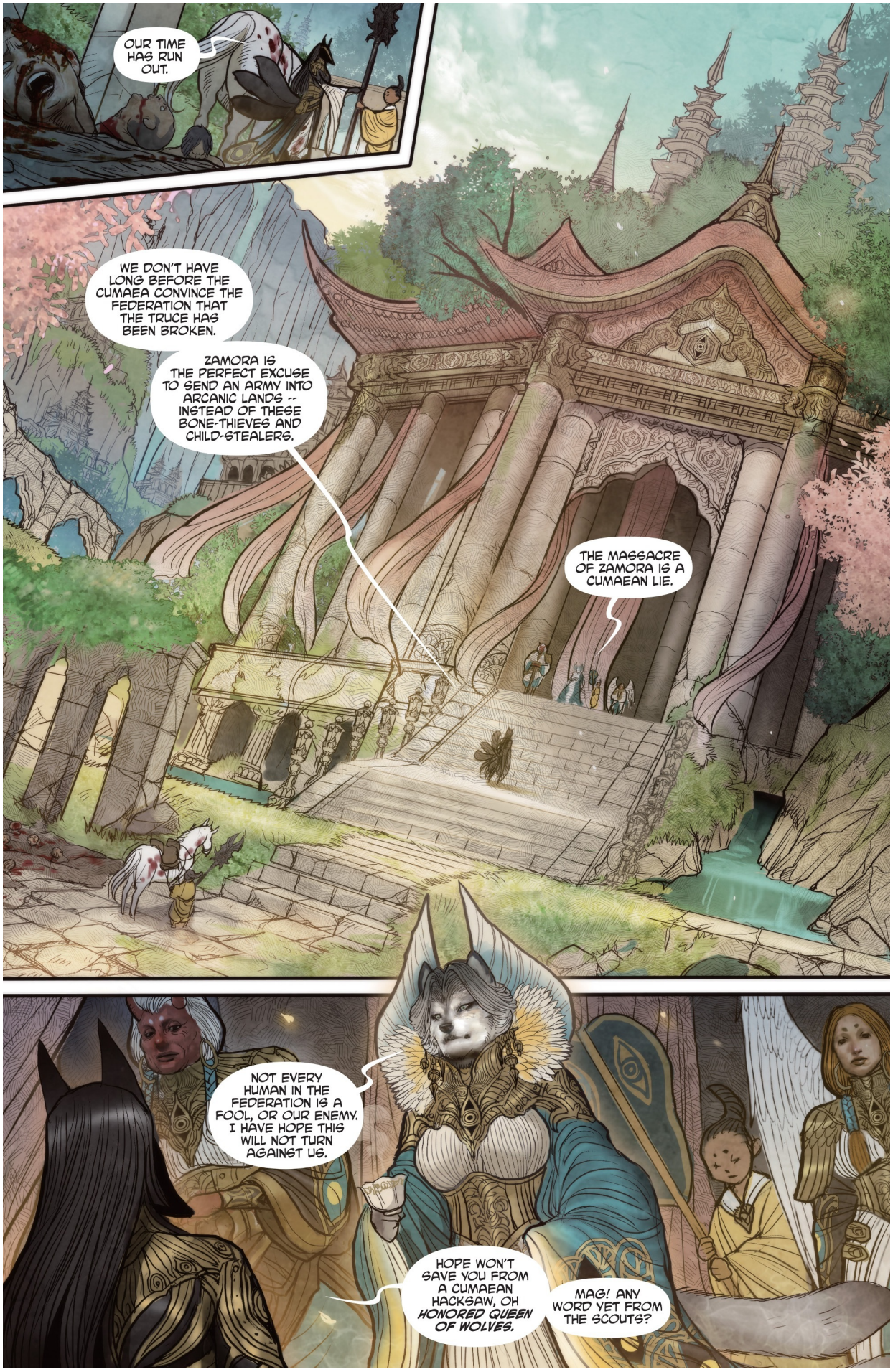
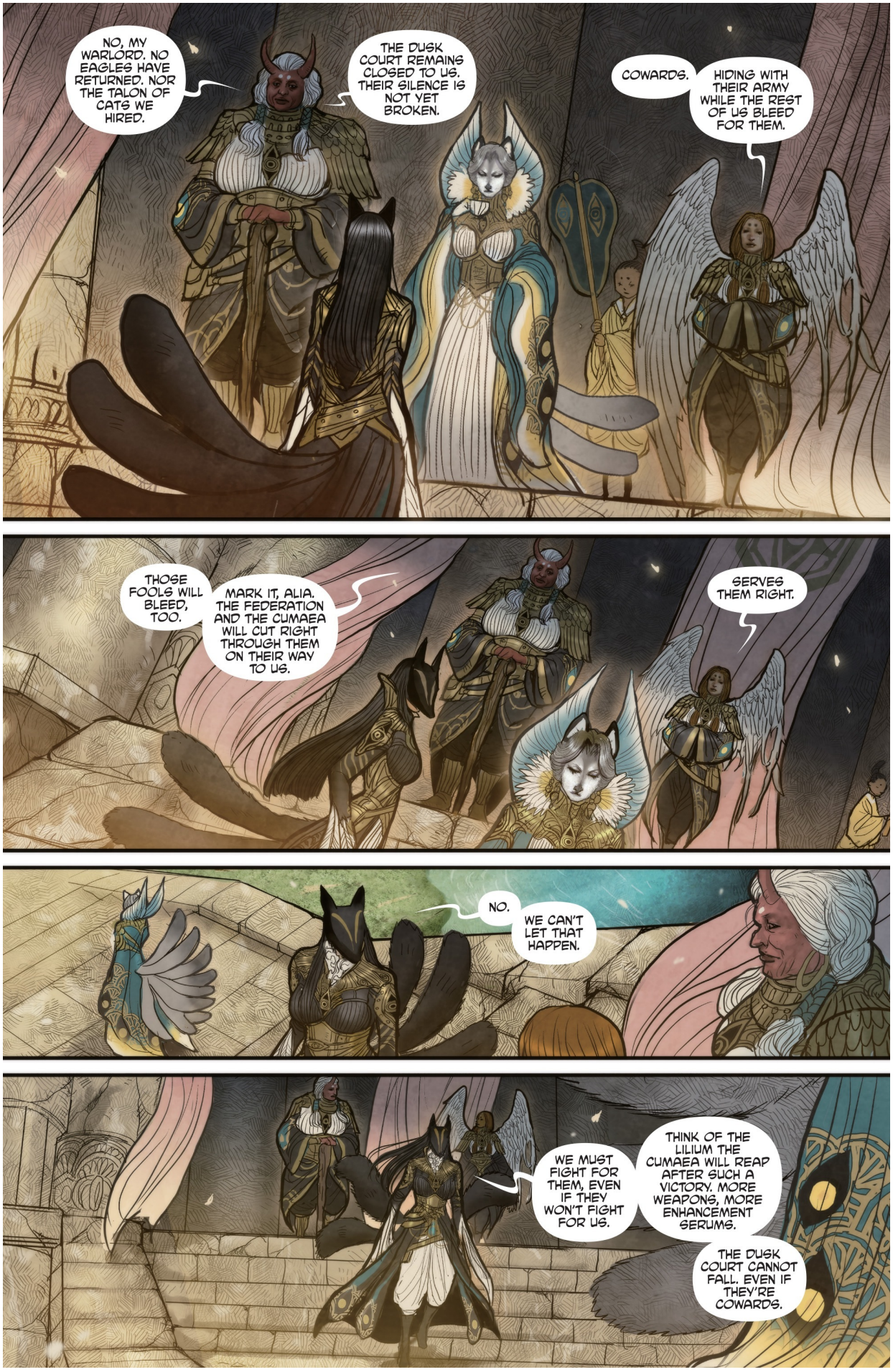
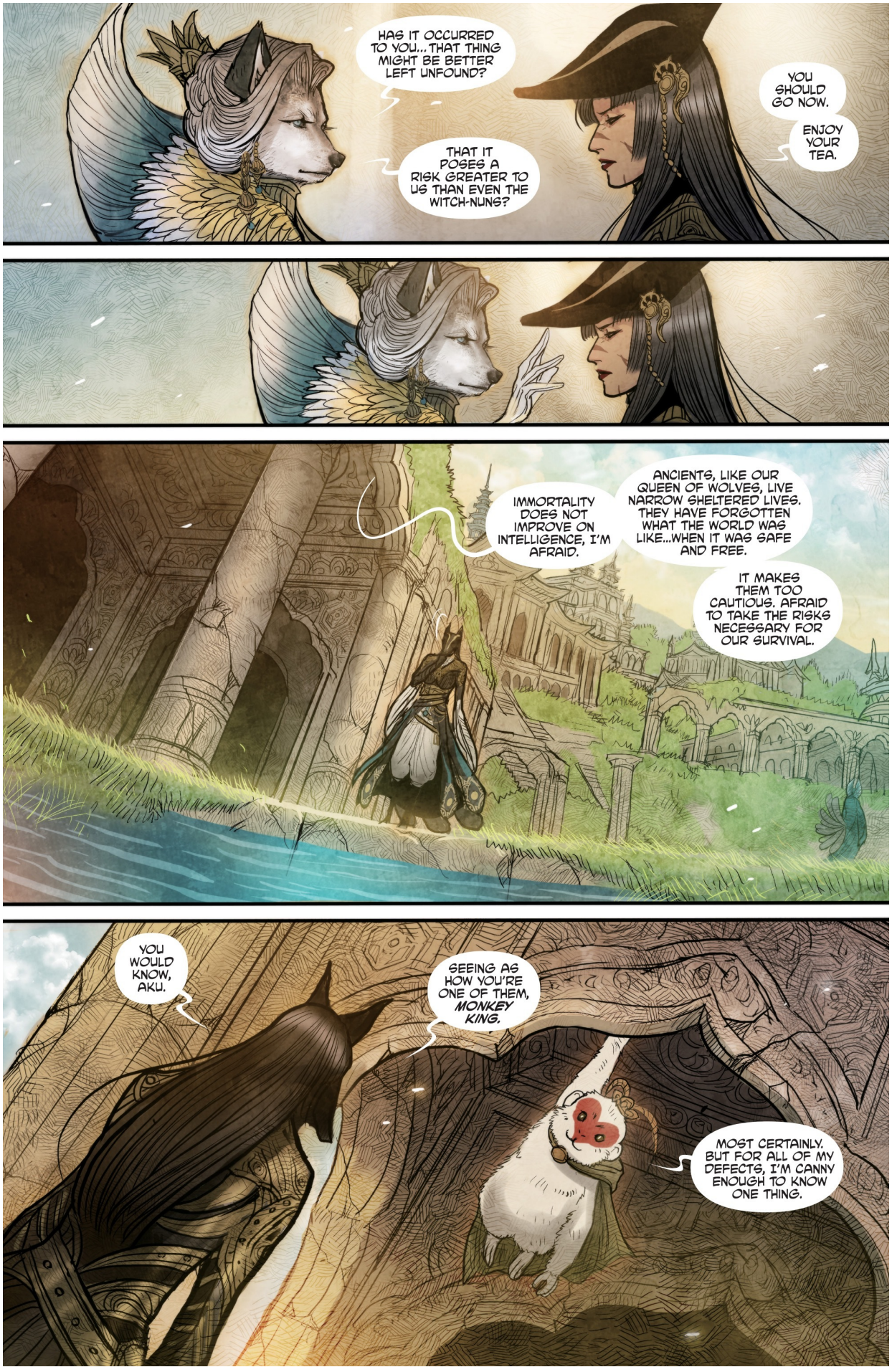
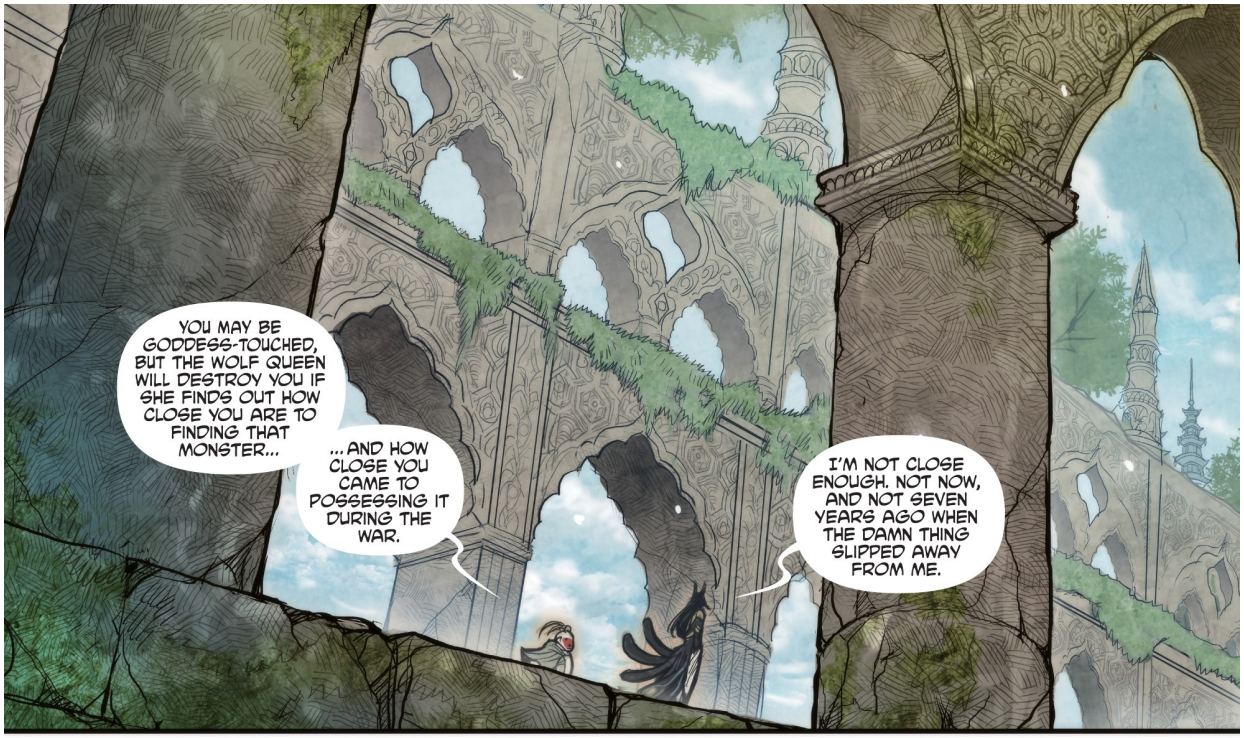
HAAAAH!
YOU'RE OVERREACTING, MY DARLING WARLORD.
MY *GENTLE* SWORD OF THE EAST.
DAMN YOU, I'M NOT A GRAVE ROBBER! I DIDN'T STEAL THOSE BONES --
SPLRRTCH
NO, I AM NOT OVERREACTING.


OUR TIME HAS RUN OUT.
WE DON'T HAVE LONG BEFORE THE CUMAEA CONVINCE THE FEDERATION THAT THE TRUCE HAS BEEN BROKEN.
ZAMORA IS THE PERFECT EXCUSE TO SEND AN ARMY INTO ARCANIC LANDS -- INSTEAD OF THESE BONE-THIEVES AND CHILD-STEALERS.
THE MASSACRE OF ZAMORA IS A CUMAEAN LIE.
NOT EVERY HUMAN IN THE FEDERATION IS A FOOL, OR OUR ENEMY. I HAVE HOPE THIS WILL NOT TURN AGAINST US.
HOPE WON'T SAVE YOU FROM A CUMAEAN HACKSAW, OH *HONORED QUEEN OF WOLVES.*
MAG! ANY WORD YET FROM THE SCOUTS?


NO, MY WARLORD. NO EAGLES HAVE RETURNED. NOR THE TALON OF CATS WE HIRED.
THE DUSK COURT REMAINS CLOSED TO US. THEIR SILENCE IS NOT YET BROKEN.
COWARDS.
HIDING WITH THEIR ARMY WHILE THE REST OF US BLEED FOR THEM.
THOSE FOOLS WILL BLEED, TOO.
MARK IT, ALIA. THE FEDERATION AND THE CUMAEA WILL CUT RIGHT THROUGH THEM ON THEIR WAY TO US.
SERVES THEM RIGHT.
NO.
WE CAN'T LET THAT HAPPEN.
WE MUST FIGHT FOR THEM, EVEN IF THEY WON'T FIGHT FOR US.
THINK OF THE LILIUM THE CUMAEA WILL REAP AFTER SUCH A VICTORY. MORE WEAPONS, MORE ENHANCEMENT SERUMS.
THE DUSK COURT CANNOT FALL. EVEN IF THEY'RE COWARDS.

LOOK AT YOU. PRETENDING NOT TO HAVE A CARE IN THE WORLD.
HOW MUST IT FEEL FOR YOU AND THE OTHER ANCIENTS?
FOR A THOUSAND YEARS YOUR POWERS HAVE FADED. YOU'RE ALL WEAK. PRACTICALLY MORTAL.
ALL YOU HAVE LEFT ARE THE SWORDS OF YOUR HYBRID CHILDREN. CHILDREN WHO DIED FOR YOU -- THOUSANDS UPON THOUSANDS OF THEM -- SO THAT YOU CAN STAND HERE TODAY AND CONTINUE PRETENDING YOU'RE ABOVE IT ALL.
AND YOU'RE NOT. YOU'RE MEAT LIKE THE REST OF US.
THE ANCESTRALS CHOSE WELL WHEN THEY MARKED YOU AS OUR WARLORD. BUT THAT DOESN'T MAKE YOU LESS A FOOL.
YOU'D BE WISE TO LISTEN TO THIS *OLD PIECE OF MEAT.* ON *ONE* THING, AT LEAST.
STOP SEARCHING FOR WHAT DESTROYED CONSTANTINE.
NEVER.
AFTER THAT BATTLE OUR SCOUTS FOUND BODIES FOR FIFTY MILES IN EVERY DIRECTION. HUMANS AND ARCANICS -- DEAD WHERE THEY STOOD.
AND FOR THE *NEXT* FIFTY MILES MANY WERE BURNED AND BLINDED.
WE HAVE A STALEMATE BECAUSE THE CUMAEA BELIEVE WE DESTROYED CONSTANTINE. BECAUSE THEY BELIEVE WE HAVE A WEAPON CAPABLE OF MURDERING WHOLE NATIONS IN THE BLINK OF AN EYE.
IT'S ONLY A MATTER OF TIME BEFORE THEY REALIZE WE LIED.


HAS IT OCCURRED TO YOU... THAT THING MIGHT BE BETTER LEFT UNFOUND?
THAT IT POSES A RISK GREATER TO US THAN EVEN THE WITCH-NUNS?
YOU SHOULD GO NOW.
ENJOY YOUR TEA.
IMMORTALITY DOES NOT IMPROVE ON INTELLIGENCE, I'M AFRAID.
ANCIENTS, LIKE OUR QUEEN OF WOLVES, LIVE NARROW SHELTERED LIVES. THEY HAVE FORGOTTEN WHAT THE WORLD WAS LIKE...WHEN IT WAS SAFE AND FREE.
IT MAKES THEM TOO CAUTIOUS. AFRAID TO TAKE THE RISKS NECESSARY FOR OUR SURVIVAL.
YOU WOULD KNOW, AKU.
SEEING AS HOW YOU'RE ONE OF THEM, MONKEY KING.
MOST CERTAINLY. BUT FOR ALL OF MY DEFECTS, I'M CANNY ENOUGH TO KNOW ONE THING.


YOU MAY BE GODDESS-TOUCHED, BUT THE WOLF QUEEN WILL DESTROY YOU IF SHE FINDS OUT HOW CLOSE YOU ARE TO FINDING THAT MONSTER...
...AND HOW CLOSE YOU CAME TO POSSESSING IT DURING THE WAR.
I'M NOT CLOSE ENOUGH. NOT NOW, AND NOT SEVEN YEARS AGO WHEN THE DAMN THING SLIPPED AWAY FROM ME.

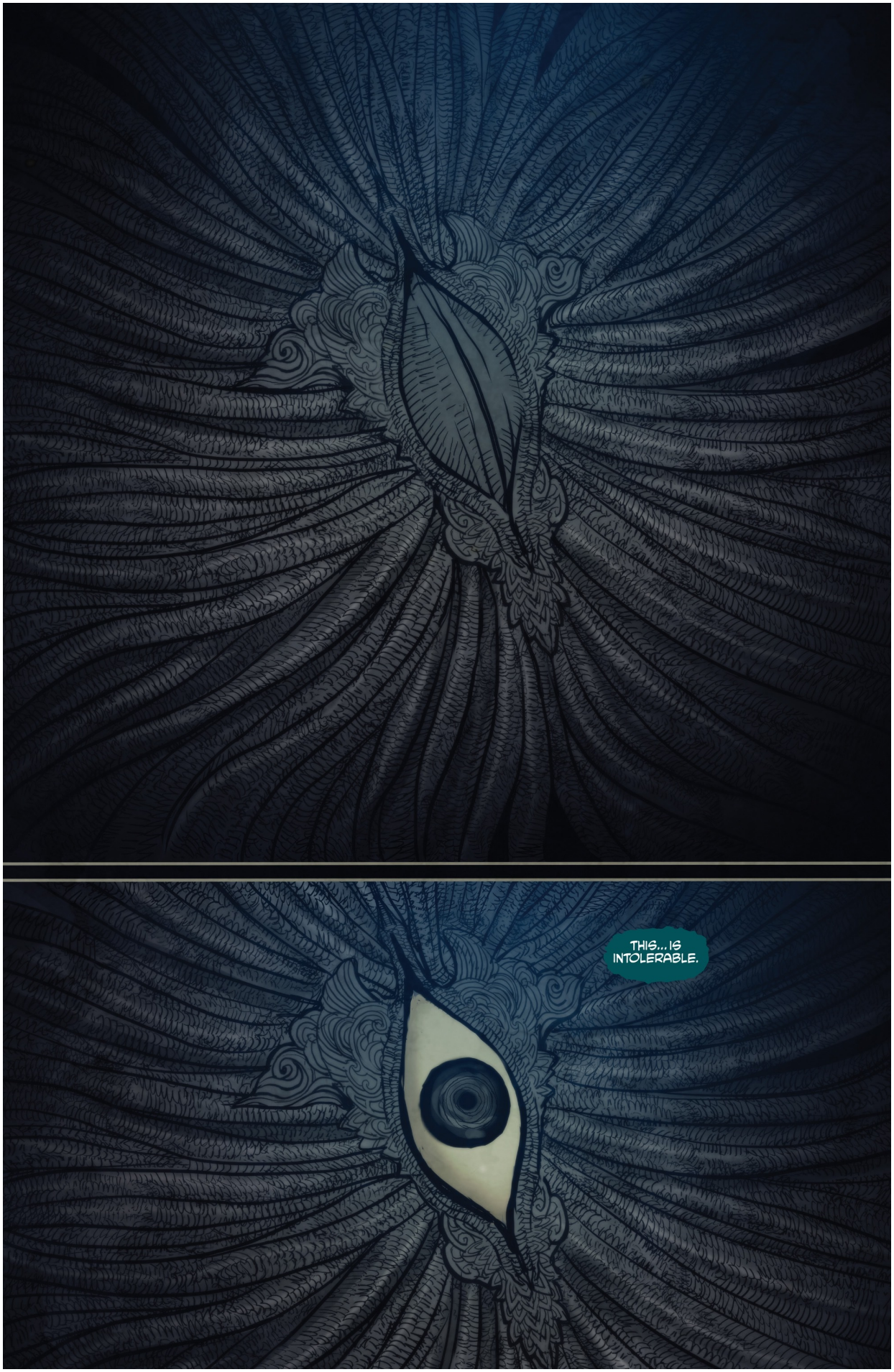
YOU'VE BEEN CLOSER THAN ANYONE IN A THOUSAND YEARS.
WELL, EXCEPT FOR YOUR SISTER, OF COURSE.

MY APOLOGIES. I FORGOT MYSELF.
NO. YOU DIDN'T.

MY LADY WARLORD...
...YOU DISCOVERED SURVIVORS FROM THE HEART OF THE BLAST, WHEN NO ONE ELSE COULD.

EIGHT ARCANIC CHILDREN WHO WALKED AWAY, WITHOUT A SCRATCH, FROM THE CONSTANTINE EXPLOSION.
YOU HAVE SIX OF THEM.

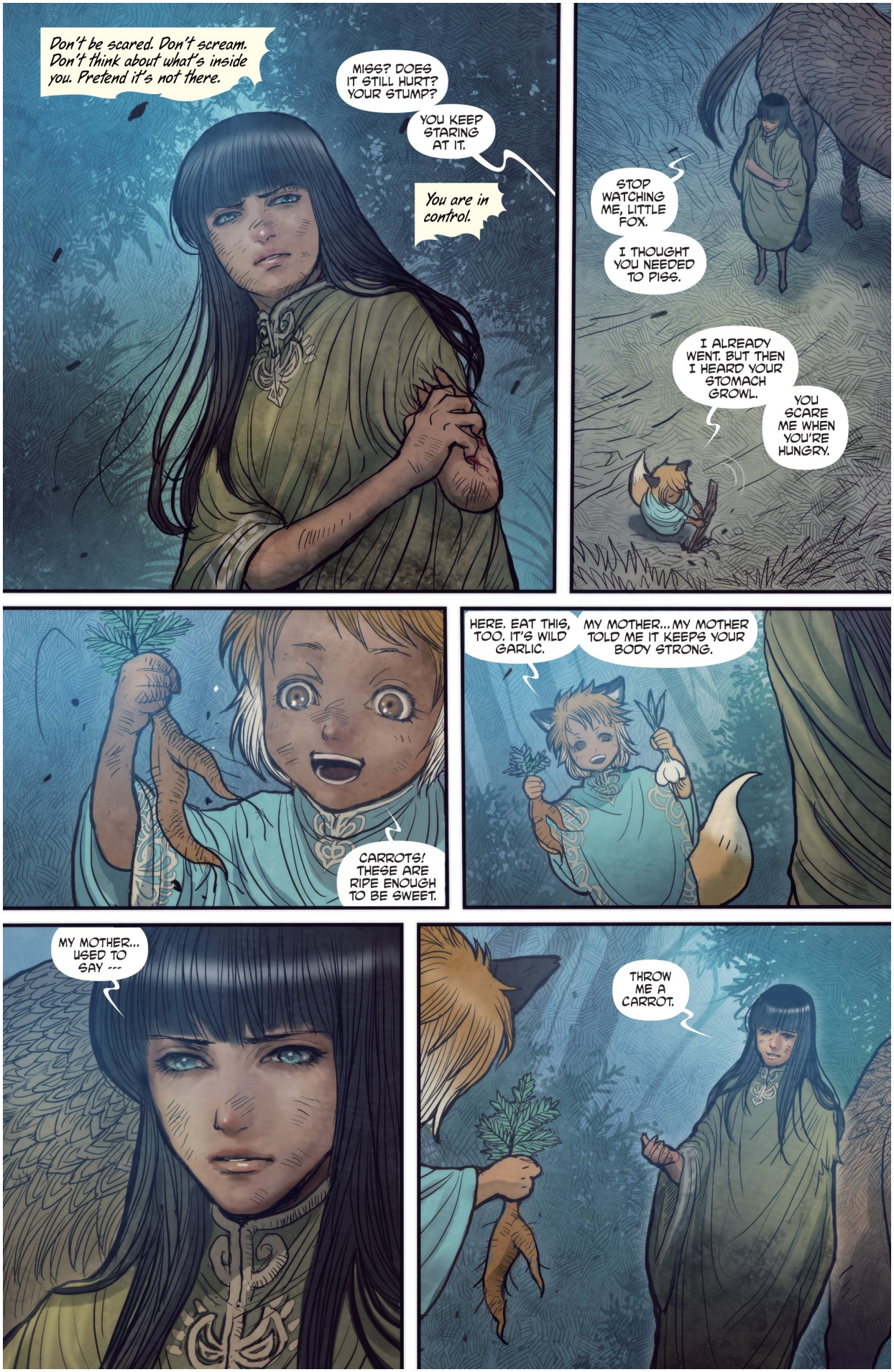
IF THEIR BODIES WON'T TELL US WHAT HAPPENED THAT DAY... AND WHO RELEASED THE MONSTER...
...MAYBE THEIR GHOSTS WILL.


THIS... IS INTOLERABLE.

I CANNOT... SLEEP.
NOT A SLEEP... DEEP ENOUGH... FOR DREAMS.
CURSE... THAT MASK.
CURSE THE CHILD... FOR FINDING IT.
AND YOU...
HAS IT BEEN... SO LONG... THAT EVEN YOUR FACE IS HIDDEN FROM ME?
HAVE I... FORGOTTEN SO MUCH?

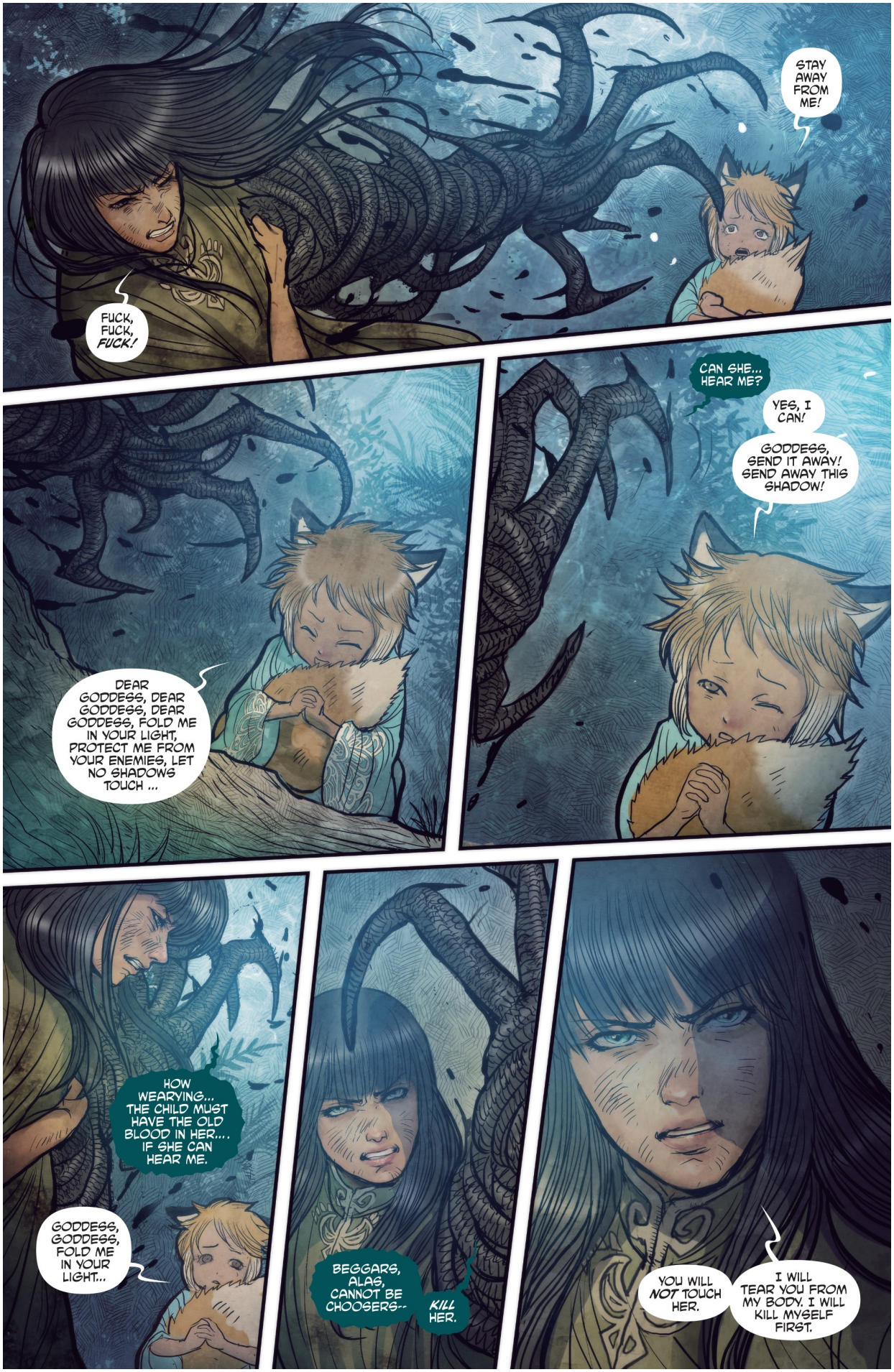
I THOUGHT... I COULD KEEP YOU ALIVE... FOREVER.
WE WERE... BOTH FOOLS.
AND NOW... I AM LOST.
AGAIN?
NO!
IS NOTHING... OF MINE... SACRED?

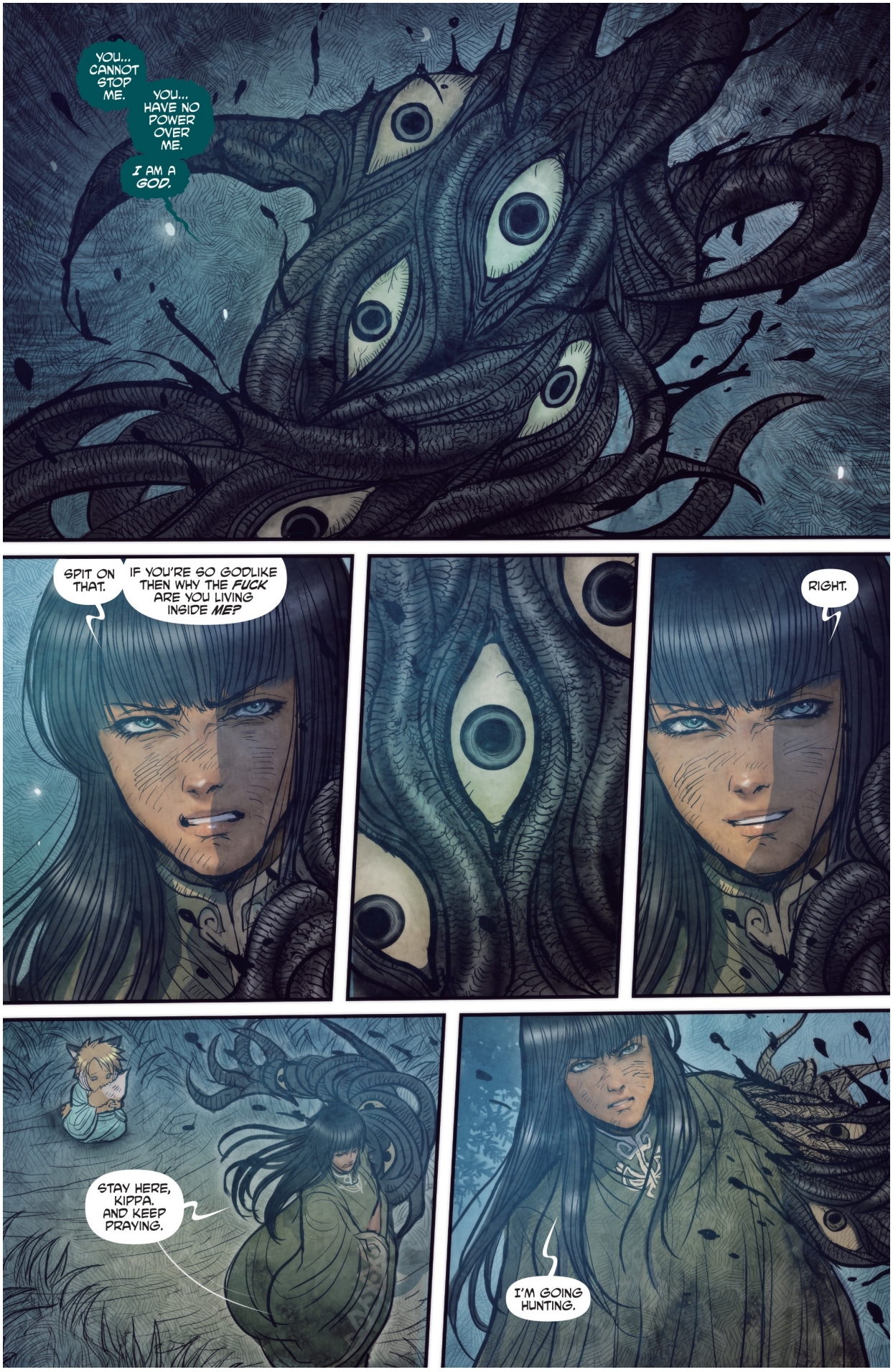
NO! PLEASE STOP!
LEAVE ME ALONE!


Don't be scared. Don't scream. Don't think about what's inside you. Pretend it's not there.
MISS? DOES IT STILL HURT? YOUR STUMP?
YOU KEEP STARING AT IT.
You are in control.
STOP WATCHING ME, LITTLE FOX.
I THOUGHT YOU NEEDED TO PISS.
I ALREADY WENT. BUT THEN I HEARD YOUR STOMACH GROWL.
YOU SCARE ME WHEN YOU'RE HUNGRY.
CARROTS! THESE ARE RIPE ENOUGH TO BE SWEET.
HERE. EAT THIS, TOO. IT'S WILD GARLIC.
MY MOTHER... MY MOTHER TOLD ME IT KEEPS YOUR BODY STRONG.
MY MOTHER... USED TO SAY ---
THROW ME A CARROT.

RRRRRPPP

AAAAAAAAHHHHHH!!!
I CANNOT... RETURN TO SLEEP.
SOMEHOW..., YOU HAVE MADE THAT IMPOSSIBLE.
YOU HAVE THE MOST... UNQUIET MIND.
WHICH IS... VEXING.
GET... OUT... OF... ME!
KRRSSHH
HOWEVER... AS I AM AWAKE... I WILL SOON REQUIRE SUSTENANCE.
WE COULD DO WORSE..., THAN TO EAT THE CHILD.
FUCK!


STAY AWAY FROM ME!
FUCK, FUCK, FUCK!
CAN SHE... HEAR ME?
YES, I CAN!
GODDESS, SEND IT AWAY! SEND AWAY THIS SHADOW!
DEAR GODDESS, DEAR GODDESS, DEAR GODDESS, FOLD ME IN YOUR LIGHT, PROTECT ME FROM YOUR ENEMIES, LET NO SHADOWS TOUCH ...
HOW WEARYING... THE CHILD MUST HAVE THE OLD BLOOD IN HER.... IF SHE CAN HEAR ME.
GODDESS, GODDESS, FOLD ME IN YOUR LIGHT...
BEGGARS, ALAS, CANNOT BE CHOOSERS--
KILL HER.
YOU WILL NOT TOUCH HER.
I WILL TEAR YOU FROM MY BODY. I WILL KILL MYSELF FIRST.

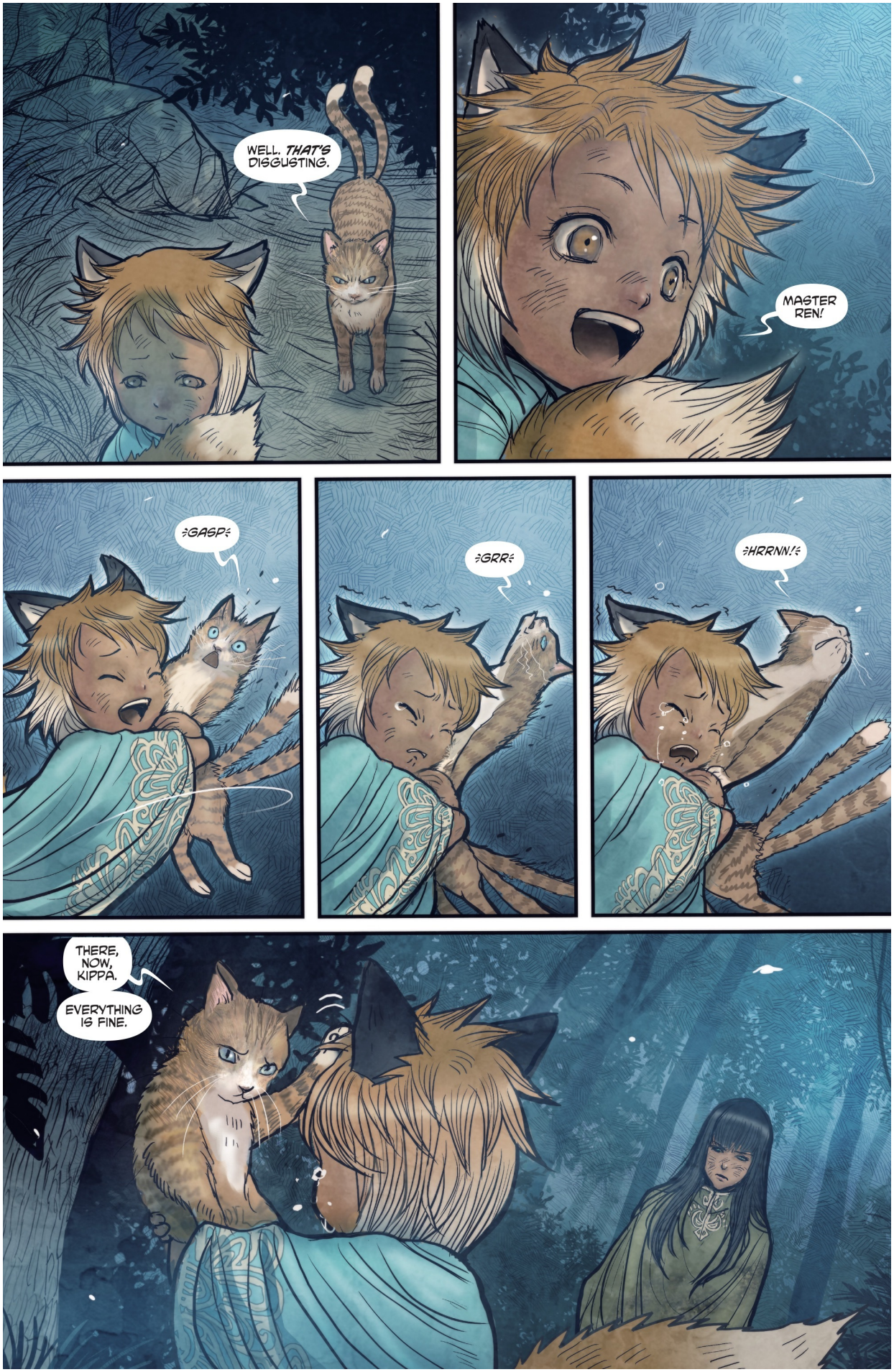

YOU... CANNOT STOP ME.
YOU... HAVE NO POWER OVER ME.
I AM A GOD.
SPIT ON THAT.
IF YOU'RE SO GODLIKE THEN WHY THE FUCK ARE YOU LIVING INSIDE ME?
RIGHT.
STAY HERE, KIPPA. AND KEEP PRAYING.
I'M GOING HUNTING.

WHAT ARE YOU? A GHOST? A SPIRIT?
A DISEASE?
YOUR QUESTIONS... DO NOT MATTER.
I HAVE SLEPT... A LONG TIME... IN OBLIVION.
BUT YOU... INTRUDED... WITH THE MASK. AND THAT WAS... ENOUGH... TO MAKE ME RESTLESS.
WORSE... YOU TOUCHED IT.
YOU TOUCHED IT.
YOU WOKE NOT ONLY ME... BUT MANY. MANY EYES WILL SEARCH... FOR THE MASK.
SEARCHING FOR THE MASK... WILL LEAD THEM TO YOU... TO ME.
IT BODES ILL FOR US ALL. EVEN... FOR THE WORLD.
YOU ARE A CHATTY FUCKING MONSTER. ESPECIALLY ABOUT NOTHING I CARE ABOUT.
NOW SHUT UP.
I REQUIRE MEALS... WITH A BIT MORE INTELLIGENCE.
THEN YOU'RE NOT REALLY HUNGRY, ARE YOU?
ON THE CONTRARY...
YOU ARE... SIMPLY LAZY.

DO YOU... HEAR THAT?
I KNOW... YOU CAN.
SOMETHING ELSE... IS IN THESE WOODS. SOMETHING... MORE APPROPRIATE.
"YOU CAN... TASTE IT.
"CAN'T YOU?
"IT IS ALREADY WOUNDED... IT IS DYING.
"WILL THAT... SATISFY... YOUR RISIBLE MORALITY?
"I THOUGHT... AS MUCH.
"THIS MEAL WILL DO..."
...FOR NOW.

GODDESS... GODDESS... FOLD ME IN YOUR LIGHT...
OH!
I TOLD YOU NOT TO GO ANYWHERE.
DON'T... DON'T...
I WON'T. I CAN'T.
THE MONSTER... IT'S GONE.

I FED IT.
WHAT IS IT? WHAT ARE YOU?
COME HERE. HELP ME LOOK FOR MY THINGS.
YOU'RE RIGHT. STAY THERE.
THE WITCH-NUNS WOULDN'T KILL THEIR OWN, WOULD THEY?
WITCHES DON'T HAVE WEAPONS THAT CAN DO THIS.
NOT MANY DO.


WELL. THAT'S DISGUSTING.
MASTER REN!
=GASP=
=GRR=
=HRRNN!=
THERE, NOW, KIPPA.
EVERYTHING IS FINE.

WHERE DID YOU GO, CAT?
I HAD TO LEAD EMILIA AND HER BABY TO A SAFE PLACE.
AND THEN I RETRIEVED YOUR BELONGINGS FROM THESE SOLDIERS.
THEY WERE STILL ALIVE, THEN.
I DIDN'T KILL THEM. THOSE WOUNDS WERE MADE BY A NIGHT-CUTTER.
THAT'S A DUSK COURT WEAPON.
BUT THE DUSK COURT IS UNDER THE SILENCE. NONE OF THEIR ARCANICS HAVE BEEN SEEN IN YEARS.
SO WHERE ARE MY BELONGINGS, CAT?
AND WHO THE FUCK IS OUT THERE USING A NIGHT-CUTTER?
THAT WOULD BE ME.

AND THIS, I BELIEVE... IS *YOURS?*
TO BE CONTINUED...

AN EXCERPT OF A LECTURE FROM THE ESTEEMED **PROFESSOR TAM TAM**, FORMER FIRST RECORD-KEEPER OF THE IS'HAMI TEMPLE, AND LEARNED CONTEMPORARY OF NAMRON BLACK CLAW...

THE POETS WILL BE THE FIRST TO CONFESS THAT NO ONE, NOT EVEN THEY -- IN ALL THEIR INSPIRED WISDOM -- CAN INDENTIFY WHERE THE ANCIENTS WERE FIRST BORN.

NOT EVEN THE ANCIENTS KNOW, FOR CERTAIN. IT IS ONE OF THE NINE GREAT MYSTERIES THAT HAS NOT YET BEEN SOLVED. GHOSTS ARE SILENT ON THE MATTER. SO IS UBASTI, BLESSED BE HER NAME.

BUT WE *DO* KNOW THE IDENTITY OF THE FIRST ARCANIC HALF-BREED.

LISTEN, KITS. THERE USED TO BE RULES. AN ANCIENT MIGHT TAKE A HUMAN AS A LOVER, BUT NOTHING WOULD COME OF IT. NO CHILDREN. NONE, EVER, FOR THOUSANDS OF YEARS. ANCIENTS RARELY BRED AMONGST THEMSELVES, BUT IT DIDN'T MATTER TO THEM.

IMMORTALITY ROBS LIFE OF ANY URGENCY. AND OTHER IMPORTANT VALUES.

HUMANS WERE AN EXOTIC PASTIME. INTELLIGENT, AMUSING, ENTERPRISING -- QUICK TO WORSHIP THE ANCIENTS AS EMMISSARIES OF THE OLD GODS. POWER IS ATTRACTIVE -- REMEMBER THAT. NO ONE, NOT EVEN THE GREATEST SERVANT OF UBASTI, IS ENTIRELY IMMUNE TO ITS CALL.

BUT POWER SOMETIMES HAS A MIND OF ITS OWN. AND IT IS THOUGHT THAT THE SAME MYSTERIOUS FORCE THAT MADE THE ANCIENTS, REMADE THEM AGAIN -- REMOVING THAT LAST WALL BETWEEN THEIR FLESH, AND HUMANS.

AND SO A CHILD WAS CONCEIVED.

NO ONE UNDERSTOOD UNTIL SHE WAS BORN. UNTIL THE MIDWIVES GAZED UPON THE INFANT'S FACE, AND INSTEAD OF A SMALL ANCIENT, FOUND THEMSELVES HOLDING A SMALL HUMAN.

OH, HOW THIS HALF-BREED FRIGHTENED THEM ALL. THE OTHER ANCIENTS ALMOST KILLED THE CHILD. THEY WOULD HAVE, HAD IT NOT BEEN FOR THE MOTHER AND HER CONSIDERABLE POWER.

AND, OF COURSE, THE AID OF A CAT -- THE GREAT POET RUSKAIYA BRASS TALON -- WHO SPIRITED THE INFANT AWAY AND RAISED HER IN THE TEMPLE OF UBASTI. OTHER HALF-BREED CHILDREN, BORN SOON AFTER, WERE *NOT* SO LUCKY.

POET RUSKAIYA MADE SURE TO STRIKE THE CHILD'S TRUE NAME FROM THE RECORDS. BUT WE *ALL* KNOW HER.

FOR SHE BECAME THE *SHAMAN-EMPRESS.* THE FIRST, AND GREATEST, OF THE MANY HALF-BREEDS TO COME. SHE, WHO WAS MORE POWERFUL THAN EVEN THE ANCIENTS.

SHE, WHO PAVED THE WAY FOR A NEW RACE, BOTH ANCIENT AND HUMAN...

...THE ARCANICS.

SHE, WHO SHATTERED THE WORLD...

MONSTRESS MAIL

We're touched and honored by all of the amazing fanmail we've received here at MONSTRESS headquarters. While space constraints prevent us from printing every letter, rest assured that we've read and loved them all. This month, though, we wanted to highlight some of our international fans, who have written to us from all corners of the globe…

Everything started when I saw, somewhere on the Internet, this giant ghost (maybe) of a three-eyed god, towering above two tiny shadows. This picture captivated me right away. Mesmerized, I stared at it for a long, long time. Under the picture was a name. MONSTRESS.

I had to know more.

So I bought the digital issue of MONSTRESS #1, and it was perfect. The graphics are so gorgeous, I don't have the right words to describe how beautiful they are – how elegant and brutal, how detailed and gloriously coloured and lighted. The story is intense and captivating, the universe mysterious yet fascinating. MONSTRESS just pulls you in and never lets go. Never before have I read a story with so many female characters, driving the narrative with such physical and emotional strength.

I absolutely loved it, so I bought MONSTRESS #2 the next day. I know now that this series will probably break my heart, but I don't mind. I can't wait for the next issue. Thank you. Thank you so much.

From France,
Émilie G.

After amazing first and second issues, I felt that I had to write. It's so easy to get into the story and care for the characters, and the drawings are absolutely awesome because they create a unique and spectacular environment. The drawings feel inspired by a combination of different cultures, mixing in a way that reminds each reader of a figure, a symbol from their own environment. I think that your imagination will affect so many people in the upcoming years, inspiring new kinds of fantasy worlds. You have a fan in Antalya, Turkey counting down weeks to read the next issue.

Best,
Ugur U.

Thank you for giving us a story that is full of substance and beautifully illustrated. If I were to pick a version of the world to live in, this would be it – in a time of peace, of course. I will never get tired of reading issues 1-3 over and over again until issue 4 this March. (I think I have a bit of a crush on Lady Sophia already, haha.) I love that the majority of the characters are of Asian descent and people of color. Since I am Filipino, I am very proud.

Sana, keep up the great artwork, and I hope this series continues for 50 issues or more. Please don't get tired of drawing something so elegant and amazingly detailed. (And beautiful ladies and cats, because I love cats!) Marjorie, thank you for a story worth reading and thank you for responding to me on Facebook. It is the closest thing to an autograph for me since I live halfway across the globe. I was and still am starstruck. Again, thank you. I cannot wait for issue 4!

Sincerely yours,
Charles R.

Greetings from Mexico City! I've been a long-time, die-hard fan of comic books and manga, and your book is one the very best I have ever jumped into. Ever. It really got me hooked from page one, and you can see how both styles blend beautifully. I love reading sci-fi, fantasy, and horror stuff… and writing, drawing, and playing drums when I have spare time. (I am a geneticist so I don´t get much!) Even if your book didn't have such an incredibly well-written story, it would be still worth buying just for the amazing art. Everything in MONSTRESS looks really promising. Can't wait to read issue 2.

Best regards,
Jörg C.

I read the first issue and I really like it. Thanks! I hope that you will continue to explore the effects of violence and war on all of us "normal" people and how it may wake up our "monsters." I'm very curious to see how the story will unfold. I also like the "Druillet" touch in Sana's artwork and I really would like to see more of it. Please continue to be brave!

For the moment, thanks!
Daniele S. - London

Thank you to all our fans, far and wide, for sticking with MONSTRESS. We hope you'll continue on the ride as Maika heads into even more dangerous territory next month. But before we go, here's one more letter, featuring some fans from our favorite part of the animal kingdom:

Just wanted to let you know that MONSTRESS #2 solidified the series as my favorite new comic. Issue 1 pulled me in with the amazingly beautiful art and intriguing story, and with this issue we got some great world building as well. Also, I must speak on Master Ren. This great "Nekomancer" (I love this by the way) could soon be my favorite character. Please, more of Ren!

I have attached a photo of my very own apprentices of Zorian, known as Syl (left) & Dalinar (right).

Thanks for making awesome comics,
Daniel E.

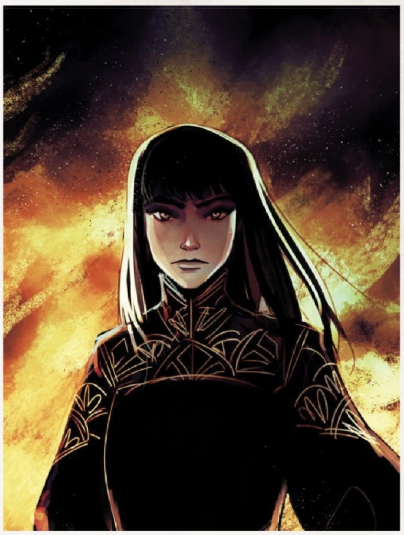
FAN ART

Send Letters & Fan Art to
monstress.comic@gmail.com
Mark Them OK TO PRINT

#Monstress for Twitter & Instagram

Here at Team MONSTRESS, we love our fans -- and we love the creative work they produce. We put out a call for you to send in your fan art, and you delivered beyond our wildest dreams. Check out some of the stunning interpretations of our hero, Maika, that we received...

Alaire Bowen from @SweetPorkComics



psuedofolio.tumblr.com

Yen Quach @yendraws

Spare Time Heroes Studio

Bryana McCoy @bryanamccoyart

Claudia hamleteer@tumblr

Wendy Xu @angrygirlcomics
Check out Wendy's great web-comic at
http://mooncakescomic.tumblr.com/

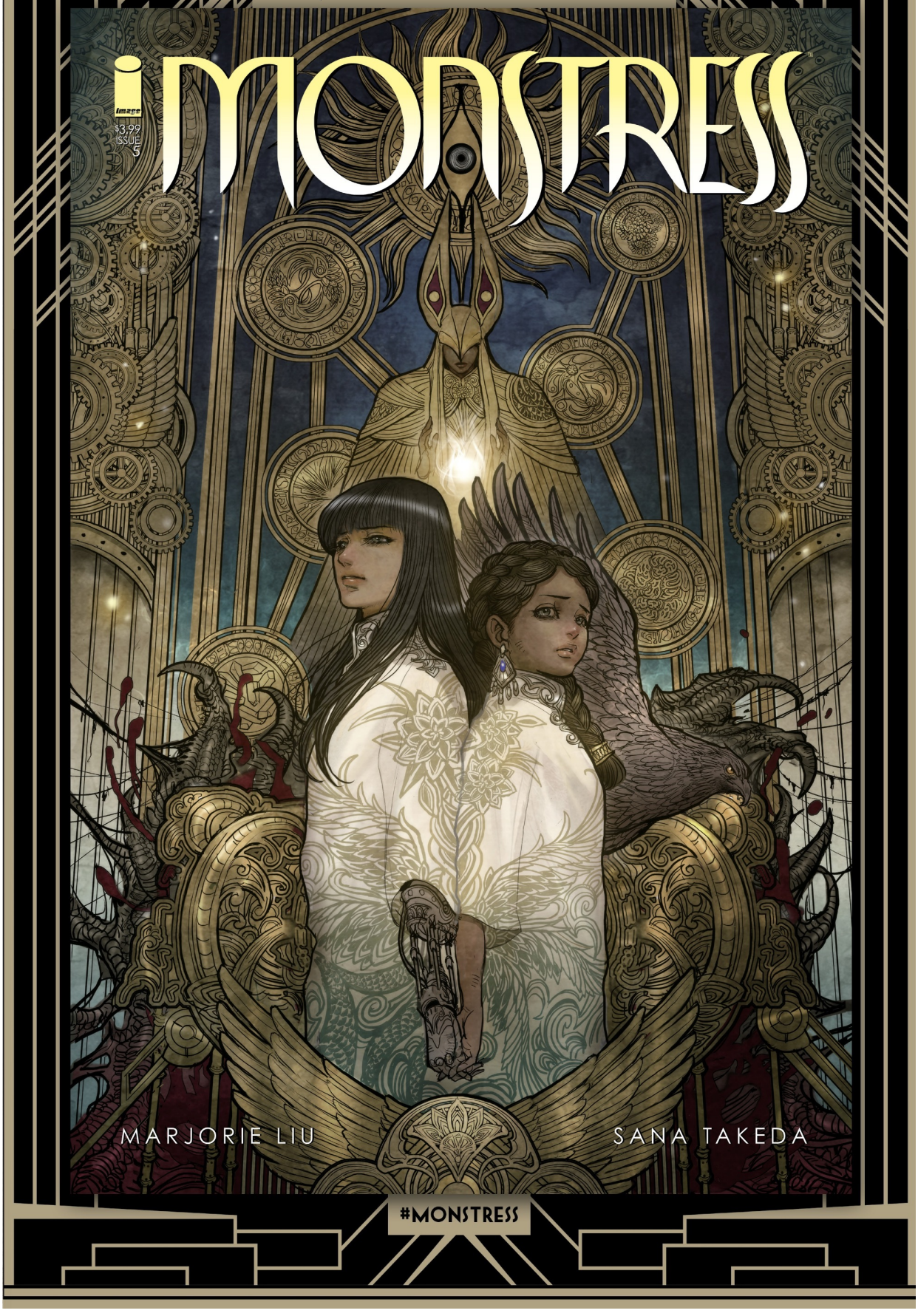
yoko360.tumblr.com

Ann Uland @NymAulth

SANA'S SKETCHES...

SANA'S SKETCHES...

NEXT ISSUE



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SPECIAL DELIVERY
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